

Posted by Ragnar | August 22, 2012

Under the Mattress: Greenpoint Artist Billy Frey Collects and Collages

A young visitor aptly described Billy Frey's show, *Under the Mattress*, as "creepy good." This pithy description of Frey's collages, assembled from vintage magazines dating from the 1930s to the 1980s, hits at the heart of his thought-provoking show currently up in Chelsea at the Chashama Gallery.

Frey, a Minnesota native, has been a resident of Greenpoint for the past two years, assembling his impressive collages within the confines of his bedroom. His collection reflects the intimacy of that environment while simultaneously demonstrating his meticulousness and skill, a striking aspect of his work and a likely holdover from his days as an architecture student.

After determining that architecture was an uncomfortable fit, Frey pursued a degree in creative writing. His interest in narrative is evident in his work as each collage gestures towards a larger, longer story.



I arrived at the Chashama Gallery this weekend to find Frey welcoming but a bit exhausted. He has been present in the gallery for the entire run of the show, answering questions and listening to conversations of those passing through. His presence in the space has provided an unusual keyhole through which he could hear and observe visitors' impressions to his manipulations of images. Frey has observed a wide range of reactions to his pieces, particularly those that raise issues of gender and feminism.

The range of emotion Frey evokes with his work is considerable. The more time and attention spent with each piece reveals a depth of perspective with subtle jokes or sophisticated juxtapositions. Frey has chosen to employ images that are infused with both explicit and implied historical and cultural values and weight; he respects this power while still insisting on his own perspective, creating an entirely new tone and feeling. Emphasizing the desire to balance humor and suffering, he described arranging



one wall of collages so that “a piece about love is next to a piece about the fragility of life, which is next to a piece about a nightmare, which is next to a joke.”

You can discover Frey’s work on your own. The closing reception for *Under the Mattress* is this Thursday, August 23rd at Chashama Galley located at 303 Tenth Avenue between 27th and 28th street. It is definitely worth the trip. You can check out his promotional video [here](#).

Frey is also working on a psychological thriller web series called, *Stalemate* that he and a friend filmed in Greenpoint. Stay tuned for more information on that . . .

Photos by John Koch

<http://greenpointers.com/2012/08/22/under-the-mattress-greenpoint-artist-billy-frey-collects-and-collages/>